

# Generalizing About Survivors

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**Generalizing** is drawing a broad general conclusion based on several pieces of specific evidence.

## **You generalize when you**

- learn that over half the students in your school have experienced the divorce of parents. You could generalize that divorce has become more common nationwide.
- realize that five girls in your class have the name Tiffany and four boys have the name Taylor. From this you could generalize that names go in and out of fashion.
- notice that several popular singing groups are made up of all males or all females. You could generalize that music is divided along gender lines.

What are some other situations when you might use the skill of generalizing?

Generalizing can be misused by sharing false generalizations. False generalizations either make blanket statements or are based on inadequate information.

**You make a false generalization when you**

- know a girl who is afraid of snakes and conclude that all girls are afraid of snakes
- know that your brothers are very interested in computers and conclude that all boys are interested in technology

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**Cluster Question:** After surviving?

**Directions:** Notice how a reader created generalizations about the effect of experiencing danger from the excerpts of **Model A**. What generalization about survival can you create from the excerpt in **Model B**?

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## Model A

My hope and plan is to wade my way back to the narrow trail a few hundred yards ahead and, when Ms. Bear loses interest or is somehow distracted, make a heroic dash for my camper. I think of the thermos of hot coffee on the front seat, the six-pack of beer in the cooler, the thin rubber mattress with the blue sleeping bag adorning it, warm wool socks in a bag hanging from a window crank, and almost  
*continued*

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## Model A

burst into tears; these simple things, given the presence of Ms. Hungry Bear, seem so miraculous, so emblematic of the life I love to live. I promise the gods—American, Indian, African, Oriental—that if I survive. I will never complain again, not even if my teenage children leave the caps off the toothpaste tubes or their bicycles in the driveway at home.

*from “Appetizer,” pages 59–60*

**Generalization:**  
When in danger, simple, everyday things become important, even “miraculous.” If the narrator survives, he promises not to complain about the little irritations.

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## Model A

I have told myself for many years that I really do love nature, love being among the animals, am restored by wilderness adventure. Considering that right now I would like nothing better than to be nestled beside my wife in front of a blazing fire, this seems to be a sentiment in need of some revision.

*from “Appetizer,” page 62*

**Generalization:**  
Confronted with danger, people long for the security of home.

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## Model B (Your Response)

He understood fully that he might actually be going to die; his arms, maintaining his balance on the ledge, were trembling steadily now. And it occurred to him then with all the force of a revelation that, if he fell, all he was ever going to have out of life he would then, abruptly, have had.

*continuea*

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## Model B (Your Response)

Nothing, then, could ever be changed; and nothing more . . . He wished, then, that he had not allowed his wife to go off by herself tonight—and on similar nights. He thought of all the evenings he had spent away from her, working; and he regretted them.

*continuea*



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## Model B (Your Response)

He thought wonderingly of his fierce ambition and of the direction his life had taken; he thought of the hours he'd spent by himself, filling the yellow sheet that had brought him out here. *Contents of the dead man's pockets*, he thought with sudden fierce anger, *a wasted life*.

*from "Contents of the Dead Man's Pockets," page 54*

### Generalization:

People in danger often regret the choices they made, especially when they chose work over relationships.